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Pawnee language

The **Pawnee language** is a Caddoan language spoken by some Pawnee Native Americans who now live in north-central Oklahoma. Their traditional historic lands were along the Platte River in what is now Nebraska.

Pawnee	
Native to	United States
Region	North-central Oklahoma
Ethnicity	2,500 Pawnee (2007)[1]
Native speakers	10 (2007)[1]
Language family	Caddoan ▪ Northern ▪ Pawnee–Kitsai ▪ Pawnee languages ▪ **Pawnee**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`paw`
Glottolog	`pawn1254 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/pawn1254)`[2]
Linguasphere	`64-BAB-b`

Pre-contact distribution of Pawnee

Contents

Dialects
Status
Phonology
Consonants
Vowels
Morphology
Alphabet
Consonants
Vowels
Notes
References
External links

Dialects

Two important dialect divisions are evident in Pawnee: South Band and *Skiri*. The distinction between the two dialects rests on differences in their respective phonetic inventory and lexicon.

Status

Once the language of thousands of Pawnees, today Pawnee is spoken by a shrinking number of elderly speakers. As more young people learn English as their first language, the status of Pawnee declines towards extinction. However, as of 2007, the Pawnee Nation is developing teaching materials for the local high school and for adult language classes. Now, there are extensive documentary materials in the language archived at the American Indian Studies Research Institute.[3] The Pawnee language can be heard spoken in the 2015 movie *The Revenant*.[4]

Phonology

The following describes the South Band dialect.

Consonants

Pawnee has eight consonant phonemes, and according to one analysis of medial- and final-position glottal stops, one may posit a ninth consonant phoneme.

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Velar	Glottal
Stop	p	t	k	(ʔ)
Affricate		ts		
Rhotic		r		
Fricative		s		h
Approximant			w	

- /ʔ/ is predictable when it occurs in the middle of words. However, since /ʔ/ is not completely predictable at the end of words, it may also need to be considered a phoneme.

Vowels

Pawnee has four short vowel phonemes and four long counterparts (also phonemic).

	Front	Back
High	i/iː	u/uː
Mid-low	e/eː	a/aː

Morphology

Pawnee is an ergative-absolutive polysynthetic language.

Alphabet

The Pawnee alphabet has 9 consonants and 8 vowels. The letters are relatively similar in pronunciation to their English counterparts.

Consonants

Spelling	Sound (IPA)	English equivalents
p	p	poke, cup
t	t	top, cat
k	k	cool, stuck
c	ʃ ~ ts	shell, push ~ pants
s	s	silly, face
h	h	heart, ahead
r	r	car, ferry
w	w	wacky, away
ʼ	ʔ	The "-" in uh-oh

Vowels

Spelling	Sound (IPA)	English equivalents
i	ɪ	sit
ii	i	feed
e	ɛ	red
ee	eɪ	paid
a	ʌ	nut
aa	ɑ	father
u	ʊ	book
uu	u	rude

Notes

1. Pawnee (https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/paw/) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Pawnee" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/pawn1254). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. http://www.ethnologue.com/language/paw
4. nolanb@indiana.edu, Bethany Nolan. "IU linguists provide Arikara and Pawnee dialogue for Oscar-nominated film 'The Revenant' " (http://archive.inside.indiana.edu/editors-picks/arts-humanities/2016-02-03-the-revenant.shtml). *Inside IU Bloomington*. Retrieved 2019-07-24.

References

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- Taylor, Allan R. (1978). [Review of *A grammar of Pawnee* by D. Parks]. *Language*, *54* (4), 969-972.

External links

- Pawnee Language Program (http://www.indiana.edu/~aisri/projects/pawnee.html), sponsored by the Pawnee Nation and Indiana University

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